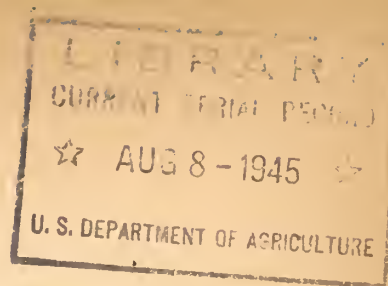


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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE
Washington, D. C.



FIELD MEMORANDUM SCS #1109

Re: Use of Commercial Educational Materials

July 26, 1945

TO ALL RANKING FIELD OFFICERS:

It is the policy of the Soil Conservation Service to assist commercial companies and other groups desiring to encourage soil conservation, by providing information and pictures and in other ways. This does not mean, however, that the Service, as a government agency, can distribute or display commercial materials to the public.

Please refer to USDA Regulations, Nos. 1215, 1575, and 1344, all of which make some reference to commercial materials. Based on these regulations and the experience of recent years, the following policy governing Service use of commercial educational materials is hereby established:

Motion pictures dealing with soil conservation. Assuming that a motion picture is a good educational film and does not contain any distasteful advertising or any reference to the commercial product in the narration or reader material, motion pictures produced by commercial firms may be used. It is well to accompany their use by a statement that showing of the motion picture "does not constitute an endorsement of the product because the Soil Conservation Service does not endorse any commercial product" and that it is being shown solely for its educational value. The fact that the name of a commercial company is shown as the producer of the film does not bar its use if that is the only reference to the company in the motion picture. The fact that a certain kind of machinery or other product is shown in the film, providing it is used in the normal expected way, does not bar the use of that film, because some kind of machine or product has to be shown.

Newspaper mats. Employees of the Service will not, under any circumstances, distribute newspaper mats containing the name of a commercial company to newspapers. This is material which can much better be handled by the local dealer or other representative of the company. Such mats are definitely a form of free advertising and the Soil Conservation Service as a public agency has neither the disposition nor the authority to request newspapers to give space to such material regardless of how worthwhile it may be from an educational standpoint.

If the local editor checks with a Soil Conservation Service office regarding the accuracy of the subject matter in a newspaper mat release, the conservationist should give the editor his honest opinion. It should be made clear,

however, that the editor is not authorized to print this opinion in the newspaper. If the editor wants a local soil conservation story to accompany a commercial mat release, this story may be provided in the same manner as any local story on soil conservation. Such press release by the Soil Conservation Service will not, of course, make any reference to the commercial release.

Posters, charts, calendars, and other wall hangings. U. S. Department of Agriculture regulations prohibit the display of such materials in Government offices (See USDA Regulation 1575). Some companies are perfectly willing, and have suggested, that we cut off the name of the company before displaying such educational posters. This is, of course, permissible. Soil Conservation Service offices should not distribute such materials except to members of cooperating Government agencies, including representatives of soil conservation districts, as an example of how commercial companies are helping to encourage soil and water conservation. In this case, the Service is merely passing along copies of certain educational materials to persons having an official connection with the program. The Service should not distribute such materials in quantity.

The above policy also applies to the use of such materials in exhibits and window displays.

Bulletins, leaflets, and books. Bulletins, leaflets, and books prepared by commercial companies cannot be distributed in penalty envelopes. This is not only a matter of Department regulation but of postal law. They must not be distributed to the public as we distribute Government or State publications. As examples of how various companies are helping to encourage soil and water conservation, they may be given to members of a cooperating agency who, because of their official position, need to see the material or are especially interested in it. Such leaflets may be given to individuals if it is the only material available which answers the question that the person is asking. In such case it should be made clear that the bulletin is being given to him for that reason and that the Soil Conservation Service does not endorse any commercial product.

M P Nichols

Acting Chief